Is This Story Share-Worthy?

Students use a flowchart to gauge the value of a news story and weigh what they should do with it.

GRADE LEVEL: Middle and high school

TIME: 30-60 minutes

MATERIALS: Is This Story Share-Worthy? flowchart, either printed on large paper or available to view on a screen(s) (download); Is This Story Share-Worthy? worksheet, one per group (download); news stories for students to evaluate (at least one per group); internet access

PREPARE

1. Review the Is This Story Share-Worthy? flowchart, including the supporting information for each question (located on the right hand side).
2. Select a variety of news stories for students to evaluate using the flowchart. Ideally, the stories should include a mix of fake news, poor quality news, opinion journalism, biased news and high quality stories.
3. Make copies of the Is This Story Share-Worthy? worksheet (one per group, or more if they will evaluate more than one story).

DO

1. Ask students how they receive and share information online. Do they share stories by text? Using social media? Which platforms?
2. Ask students how they decide whether a story is worth passing on.
3. Explain that the First Amendment protects our freedom to seek out and share information, but not everything out there is good quality, or even real. Introduce the Is This Story Share-Worthy? graphic. Explain that this is a tool that can help them decide whether a story is worth spreading to other people. Go over the questions to make sure students have a general understanding of what they mean and how to navigate the flowchart.
4. Divide students into groups and give each group a news story (or stories), access to the Is This Story Share-Worthy? graphic and a copy of the Is This Story Share-Worthy? worksheet.
5. Have students use the graphic to fill out the worksheet and reach a conclusion for their assigned story. Then share and discuss their findings and experience.

DISCUSS

1. What type of impact do you think your assigned story would have if it was shared by many people?
2. How easy or difficult was it to use this flowchart? Which questions were the easiest to answer? Which questions were more difficult?
3. Do you agree with the conclusion that you reached using the flowchart? Explain.
4. It's not realistic to use this flowchart every time you are trying to decide what to do with a story in real life, so what are a few top tips that you can take from this graphic and apply quickly? (For example: Check a key fact if you're not sure if a story is real or fake.)